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SUBJECT: UNGA PRESIDENT D'ESCOTO OPENS GENERAL DEBATE WITH  
TONED DOWN SPEECH

REF: A. USUN NEW YORK 831

1B. USUN NEW YORK 842

11. (U) UN General Assembly President Miguel D'Escoto spoke upon the September 23 opening of the United Nations General Debate. Consistent with his September 16 speech opening the 63rd United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) session (Ref A), he called for cooperation and solidarity, criticized the UN Security Council, and identified priority issues (including poverty, climate change, and terrorism). As he had assured Ambassador Khalilzad on September 18 (Ref B); however, this speech was toned down considerably in comparison to the UNGA speech and did not include any veiled jabs at the United States. In mentioning upcoming speakers, he referred to President Bush and stated: "What he has to say to us will be of great importance to the world."

12. (U) Characterizing the international situation as "far from satisfactory," D'Escoto highlighted the need "to introduce corrective measures" through cooperation and solidarity. While he stated that the United Nations has accomplished "many laudable things," he added that "we have failed" in: "eliminating war, achieving disarmament, and ensuring international security." D'Escoto, quoting Russian writer Leo Tolstoy, attributed the state of the world to the "mania of selfishness."

13. (U) Alluding to the Security Council, D'Escoto stated that "a small group of states take decisions based on selfish motives, and the world's poor are the ones who suffer the consequences." He added that Assembly resolutions are "mere recommendations that are casually ignored even though they represent the wishes of 95 percent of the Organization's members." Echoing his September 16 remarks (Ref A), he deemed sovereign equality among member states a major UN principle, and stated that failure to uphold such principles amounted to "a serious breach of international commitments" and "an attack on the United Nations and its ability to work effectively for peace."

Khalilzad